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10-29-1999

CropWatch No. 99-24, Oct. 29,1999

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CROP WATCH

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension
Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

No. 99-24
Oct. 29, 1999

Record-setting dry spell causing concern for soil moisture recharge, state's winter wheat

September and October are some of the driest months on record in eastern Nebraska. If Lincoln doesn't receive any rain by Oct. 31, this will be the fourth driest October in the last 111 years, not a good record for those producers needing moisture for emerging wheat and an opportunity to recharge the soil. So far Lincoln has recorded 0.03 inches of precipitation. The high for October is 5.4 inches in 1986, and the low is 0.0 inches in 1952.

The numbers for Lincoln are fairly typical for a growing area of eastern Nebraska according to USDA Drought Monitor Statistics released Oct. 19. While not considered a drought, about 30% of eastern Nebraska is considered "dry," a change from "normal" just two weeks ago. Without significant precipitation during the month of November, we should expect that this area will expand to cover much of Nebraska.

Using the High Plains Climate Center's Automated Weather Data Network, one can see that the dryness covers much of the state. Average district precipitation from September 1 to October 26 as recorded by the AWDN stations indicates the Panhandle averaged 2.69 inches or 133% of normal, by far the wettest area of the state. The remainder of the state climate districts are as follows: north central - 1.69 or 49% of normal; northeast - 0.47 or 18%; central - 1.02 or 26%; east central - 1.80 or 34%; southwest - 1.47 or 51%; south central - 1.16 or 30%; and southeast - 1.17 or 22%.

The Climate Prediction Center shows the long-term precipitation outlook for Nebraska to be slightly above normal for November and normal for the rest of winter, making it difficult to make up for these early losses. However, the upper atmospheric pattern has not signaled that there will be any significant deviation from what has persisted during the past two months for at least the next 14 days. Time is rapidly running out on the fall recharge period, with the soil likely to freeze within the next 45 days.

(Continued on page 213)

Agriculture at the Crossroads Conference to be Nov. 4

Commodity prices, farm policy and agriculture's changing structure will be topics at an educational seminar here Nov. 4.

The ninth Agriculture at the Crossroads conference will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Union.

"This year's program addresses alternatives to the 1996 federal farm bill and the changing structure of agriculture," said Ray Supalla, an NU agricultural economist and conference coordinator.

Inside: Special issue on winter programs

"Presentations are intended to facilitate more effective participation in future policy debates on these critical issues."

State Sen. Ron Raikes of Lincoln, president of the Nebraska Ag Relations Council, will moderate a

(Continued on page 213)

Inside

Field updates/briefs	212
Sample crop budgets	213
Winter meetings	214
Rural writings sought	216
New Web site	218
Bt stalk grazing	218



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University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.



Briefs

Paul Hay, Extension educator in Gage County: Harvest is done this week in southeast Nebraska. Farmers are pondering their options regarding wheat due to the very dry conditions.

Wheat is in fair to poor conditions. Many fields are soft and the wheat planted about October 1 is still sitting in dry soil. Without an inch of rain before November 15 the crop will be in very serious condition going into the winter.

We harvested the Milo Producers Association plot this week. Yields ranged from 116 to 145 bushels per acre.

Ralph Kulm, Extension educator in Holt County: The Holt/Boyd area is dangerously dry. Later planted wheat is lying in dry soil. Pastures and alfalfa fields will need a lot of moisture before next spring if growth is expected.

Ray Weed, Extension educator in Kimball and Banner counties: Sugarbeet harvest here is progressing well although the ground is dry so there is some concern regarding breaking off part of the beet tip in the ground.

Sunflower and corn harvest is moving along. Winter wheat here could use a rain.

Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, reported Oct. 25: Another week with virtually no rainfall allowed fall harvest to advance quickly, but left many pastures and some fall planted crops needing moisture.

Moisture supplies were reported as adequate in much of western Nebraska short in southeast Nebraska where drought like conditions were limiting wheat emergence. Fire danger in eastern counties was high, with numerous small fires being reported. Other producer activities for the week included fall tillage, and livestock care.

Corn harvest reached 74%, near 73% last year, but well ahead (nine

days) of 54% average. If conditions hold, most producers will finish harvest within the next ten days. Grain coming out of fields had fallen, in some cases, to as low as 10% moisture. Corn was being piled on the ground at numerous elevators, waiting for railcars to arrive.

Soybean harvest was virtually complete at 96%, ahead of 86% last year, and an 89% average.

Sorghum harvest rated 66% complete, behind 74% last year, but near 63% average.

Alfalfa conditions rated 3% very poor, 17% poor, 36% fair, 41% good, and 3% excellent.

Dryland producers in many eastern counties were looking for

additional moisture to support overwintering of the crop.

Wheat acreage emerged rated 96%, near 95% last year, 97% average; however, because of dry conditions, only about half of the southeastern fields had emerged.

Farm Service Agency News Release: USDA Production Flexibility Contract final payment rates were announced this week for fiscal year 2000. Eligible Nebraska producers will share in \$362 million. Eligible farmers can choose to receive payments all at once on in two equal payments. Payment rates are 33.4 cents/bu for corn; 40.0 cents/bu for sorghum, and 58.8 cents/bu for wheat. Contact your local FSA Office for details.



CROP WATCH

In print or on the Web

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Crop Watch is published from March to November by the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Communications and Information Technology, PO Box 830918, 108 Agricultural Communications Bldg., UNL, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918. To order either a printed or electronic (web) subscription or to change your address, write to *Crop Watch* at the above address or call (402) 472-7981. A sample copy of the Web version is available free at <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/cropwatchnews>

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Dry spell (Continued from page 211)

In early October the High Plains Climate Center reported that Nebraska topsoil moisture averaged 54% short to critically short and that the subsoil was 45% short to critically short. As of October 17, topsoil moisture was 70% short to critically short and the subsoil moisture was 57% short to critically short. In essence, most of the state has only received 0.50 - 2.00 of soil moisture recharge.

If the dry spring predicted across the central High Plains

For more information on weather conditions and precipitation statistics, visit the High Plains Climate Center Web site at <http://hpccsun.unl.edu>. A section on climactic impacts includes information of agriculture.

materializes, subsoil moisture recharge will be inadequate heading

into the 2000 planting season. Most of the state will need to receive much above normal precipitation during the first 90 days of the growing season to minimize the impacts of below normal soil moisture. Thus, there is a better than average chance of drought conditions materializing for the 2000 growing season.

Al Dutcher
State Climatologist
Agricultural Meteorology

Nebraska crop budgets and worksheets posted to the Web

Sample budgets have been developed for a variety of crops and regions within Nebraska and compiled in *Nebraska Crop Budgets* (EC99-872), a publication of NU Cooperative Extension. Livestock budgets also are being revised.

To assist with farm management and planning this winter, a limited version of *Crop Budgets* has been developed for the Web and is available at <http://ianrwww.unl.edu/pubs/farmmgmt/ec872/index.htm>. It includes a representative budget of crop and machine operations and a worksheet from each geographic region in the state.

Representative field operating rates, fuel use, labor requirements, and materials needed were budgeted for each crop. An annual use and years-to-trade were used to determine annual ownership costs for equipment. These assumptions are summarized at the beginning of each set of budgets. Although the budgets are titled by geographical areas of the state, the applicability of the budgets is determined more by climatic and soil conditions. The

crop budget worksheets present representative costs for a typical set of practices and are not a statistical estimate of the cost of production. The worksheets are designed for preparing a budget, making modifications as appropriate.

Two budget worksheets are included for each enterprise. The *Return above Operating Costs* worksheets will be useful in comparing enterprises where there is little difference in machine use. Where differences in machine use are significant, machinery depreciation costs will be variable and should be added to operating costs and the total subtracted from returns to compare net returns. If machinery would be added or dropped, THII (Taxes, Housing, Interest and Insurance) costs will also be variable and should be reflected in a comparison of net returns. Estimated machinery depreciation and THII costs by operation are provided under each geographical grouping of budgets, for example, "Panhandle Gravity

Irrigated Crops".

The *Returns above Total Costs* worksheets provide a format for estimating total costs where management, overhead and ownership costs are allocated to each enterprise. There are several methods that can be used for allocating costs between enterprises (percentage of operating costs or revenue, for example).

Each method may have some logic associated with it but each method is still basically arbitrary. When evaluating a decision of whether to add or drop an enterprise, the change in cost should be estimated directly e.g. how much would overheads (liability insurance, accounting fees, etc.) change if a hay enterprise were added? The marginal change in cost estimate will likely be quite different from an estimate where those costs are allocated as a percentage of revenue or operating costs.

Production, marketing, risk management among topics for winter programs

Cooperative Extension winter programs offer opportunities to learn about the latest changes in agriculture or pursue specific topics to greater depths. This issue and some of the next issue of Crop Watch will feature information about these opportunities. For more information, contact your nearest Extension educator or the contact listed with the story.

Corn/Soybean Expo 2000: Enhancing your profitability

Producers can get the latest recommendations from University of Nebraska Extension Specialists on how to enhance their profit potential through production, marketing and risk management in the year 2000. The programs will be conducted at eight sites across the state, with the first day mostly emphasizing production issues and the second day featuring marketing and risk management. The two day sessions, which last from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., will be held one-week apart.

Registration is \$15 for each day and is accepted at the door.

Topics for the first day of each session will include:

- A Crop Doctor's Perspective on Improving Yields
- Variety and Hybrid Selection — GMOs
- Weed Management With and Without Herbicide

Tolerant Crops

- Insects in the Corn/Soybean Rotation
- Diseases in the Corn/Soybean Rotation
- New Developments in the Soybean and Corn

Industries

• Marketing Opportunities I Should be Looking For, with Producer Roy Smith

• Fertility Management in the Corn/Soybean Rotation

- Water Management — Irrigation

• The Most Profitable Crop Rotations — Costs of Production

The second day of the sessions will feature a workshop exploring alternatives for enhancing prices and managing risk, building on Roy Smith's presentation from the first day. Workshop objectives are to help producers:

- Evaluate what to produce and how to market — commodity grains, GMOs and niche markets;

- Determine realistic price expectations;
- Assess your risk management needs and see how crop insurance and forward pricing can help;
- Understand your alternatives for using loan and LDP provisions; and
- Develop a plan and how to achieve the plan.

The two-day programs will be held at:

McCook, Mondays, Jan. 31 and Feb. 7, Fairgrounds Community Building; contact Kent Been at (308) 345-3390 for more information.

Kearney, Tuesdays, Feb. 1 and Feb. 8, Buffalo County Extension Office, 1400 East 34th St.; contact Ralph Anderson at (308) 236-1235 for more information.

Broken Bow, Wednesdays, Feb. 2 and Feb. 9, Uncle Ed's Steak House, contact Troy Walz at (308) 872-6831 for more information.

O'Neill, Thursdays, Feb. 3 and Feb. 10, Allison's Restaurant, downtown, contact Ralph Kulm at (302) 336-2760 for more information.

York, Mondays, Feb. 14 and Feb. 21, Chances "R" Restaurant, 124 West Fifth St.; contact Gary Zoubek at (402) 362-5508 for more information.

Cook, Tuesdays, Feb. 15 and Feb. 22, Community Building; contact Ken Burgert at (402) 274-4755 for more information.

Humphrey, Wednesdays, Feb. 16 and Feb. 23, City Hall, contact Steve Pritchard at (402) 563-4901 for more information.

Emerson, Thursdays, Feb. 17 and Feb. 24, First National Bank; contact Jill Heemstra at (402) 375-3310 for more information.

For more information about these programs, contact Robert Klein, Extension Cropping Systems Specialist, or your local Cooperative Extension office. These meetings are sponsored by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, USDA Risk Management Agency, and Farm Credit Services of America in cooperation with the Nebraska Corn and Soybean Boards and Growers Associations.

Winter meetings *(Continued)*

Ag at the Crossroads

(Continued from page 211)

discussion of current farm prices and incomes. Speakers on other topics include Neil Harl, a lawyer and agricultural economist at Iowa State University; State Sen. Roger Wehrbein of Plattsmouth, chairman of the Nebraska Legislature's Appropriations Committee; producer Dick Mercer of Kearney, co-chairman of the Nebraska 1996 Farm Bill Task Force; and Roy Frederick, Mike Turner, Jeff Royer, Sam Cordes and Doug Jose, all NU agricultural economists. Representatives for U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., and U.S. Rep. Doug Bereuter, R-Neb., also will speak.

Sponsors are the Nebraska Ag Relations Council, a non-profit, non-partisan volunteer organization dedicated to telling Nebraska agriculture's story, and the university's agricultural economics department. The department is part of NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Registration is \$25 per person for Nebraska Ag Relations Council members and \$30 per person for non-members. Fees include lunch. Reservations are due Nov. 2. Send checks payable to the Nebraska Ag Relations Council to NARC, 104 Ag Communications Building, P.O. Box 830918, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb., 68583-0918. For more information, call Sandy at (402)472-2821.

Risk assessment workshop

A new University of Nebraska workshop will offer updated information on risk management alternatives and potential changes in the crop industry.

"Risk Assessment for the New Millennium: Helping You Help Your Farm Customers through Challeng-

ing Times" will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Nov. 17 at the Holiday Inn in Kearney.

The workshop is targeted for crop insurance agents, lenders, commodity brokers, grain merchandisers, professional farm managers, crop consultants and financial advisors. Growers also can benefit from the workshop by directly applying management tools to their operations.

Participants will learn to assess the implications of risks for agricultural managers during the next year and beyond, evaluate replacement coverage provided by crop insurance contracts and how they can be combined with price risk management tools, and help growers identify and manage their critical risks.

The workshop is approved by the Nebraska Insurance Department for six hours of crop credit.

Presenters include G.A. (Art) Barnaby Jr., agricultural economist at Kansas State University; Joe Groen, Nebraska field supervisor for Blakely Insurance; Ken Harrison, crop insurance management specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency; Bev Paul, legislative assistant to U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey; Deb Rood, programs coordinator at NU's Department of Agricultural Economics; and Rob Westmoreland, executive vice president of Sparks Companies Inc. of Memphis, Tenn.

Registration, which includes instruction, handout materials and lunch, is \$50 by Nov. 12. Registrations postmarked after Nov. 12 are \$65. Cancellations after Nov. 12 are subject to a \$25 fee.

To register, send checks made payable to the University of Nebraska to Insurance and Marketing Update, Agricultural Economics Department, University of Nebraska, Room 303 Filley Hall, P.O. Box 830922, Lincoln, Neb., 68583-0922.

For more information or to register, call the Insurance and Marketing Update at (402) 472-1742, fax at (402) 472-0776 or contact a local Cooperative Extension office.

The workshop is sponsored by NU Cooperative Extension in cooperation with National Crop Insurance Services, with funding from USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Decisions 2000 business plan

A three-part workshop in December and January will help farm operators create a working model of a business plan, which is becoming increasingly important to explain complex operations to their crop consultants, landlords, employees and family members.

"Decisions 2000: Management for the 21st Century Business Plan Workshop" is geared toward Nebraska pork producers, but any diversified farm operation would benefit, said Al Prosch, coordinator for University of Nebraska Pork Central and for the workshop.

The workshop is 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Dec. 14, Jan. 11 and Jan. 25 at the New World Inn in Columbus.

In its third year, the workshop responds to pork producers questioning how the traditional farm producer fits into the changing structure of agriculture, Prosch said.

Pork producer Merlin Oswald of Madison, Neb., said the focus on goal setting and short- and long-term planning helped him the most.

Oswald said the workshop also gives its participants a chance to share ideas with others and to see what they are doing with the current economic situation.

"In a rapidly changing business, continuing education no longer is an option but a necessity," Oswald said.

Winter meetings *(Continued from page 215)*

Four main presenters include Prosch, Deb Rood, Larry Bitney and Wade Nutzman. Invited speakers include Steve Cady, executive director of the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, speaking on the "Structure of the Pork Industry." Brent Fitzke, a UNL student who's taking on a new agricultural enterprise, will speak on "Alternative Farm Enterprises and their Marketing."

Registration is \$150 for two persons and includes meals. Others involved in the operation are encouraged to attend for an additional \$25. Class size is limited to 15 farm units, with about a 45-person maximum. Those attending are encouraged to register by Dec. 9, but late registrations will be accepted.

For registration information, contact Pork Central at (800) 767-5287 or a local Cooperative Extension office.

Decisions 2000 is sponsored by NU Cooperative Extension, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska Pork Producers Association and Pork Central.

Pork Central, a clearinghouse for swine contacts and information, is sponsored by the Nebraska Pork Producers Association and Cooperative Extension in NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. For more information, call (800)767-5287 or check out Pork Central on the World Wide Web at <http://ianrwww.unl.edu/porkctr/>.

Smoothing transitions: When children return to join the farm

A family farm can stay in the family through successful adjustment and transition when a son or daughter returns home to join the family farm or ranch. Through careful planning and effort, the family can help the young person get started, they can keep the farm/

ranch in the family, and they can ensure a comfortable retirement for the parents.

Blending a variety of talents and personalities into one farming or ranching operation takes planning, communication and management. This NU Cooperative Extension program is designed to help families develop successful working arrangements.

Participants will:

- Complete a farm/ranch balance sheet.
- Complete five-year trend sheets.
- Write long- and short-term business and family goals.
- Assess the preferences of individuals in the operation.
- Recognize different personalities and learn to work with each individual's strengths.
- Become informed about alternative business arrangements.
- Analyze the operation's financial performance.
- Evaluate various operating alternatives.

The program is conducted by Deb Rood, programs coordinator,

Wade Nutzman, Extension farm management assistant, and Larry Bitney, Extension farm management specialist, all in the NU Department of Agricultural Economics.

The program will be offered at the UNL East Campus and the NU College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis. Participants are expected to attend both weekends at each site.

Lincoln: 1-9 p.m. Dec. 3; 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Dec. 4; 1-9 p.m. Jan. 14; and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 15.

Curtis: 1-9 p.m. Dec. 10; 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Dec. 11; 1-9 p.m. Jan. 21; and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 22.

Deadline for preregistration is Nov. 19; however, registrations will be accepted up to the date of the first weekend of the program if it is not filled. Registration is limited to the first 15 families with paid registrations.

Cost is \$150 per family unit, plus \$10 per attending family member. The cost will cover materials, breaks and one meal.

For more information, contact Deb Rood, UNL Ag Economics Department, at (800) 535-3456.

NU seeks rural writings

A University of Nebraska-Lincoln project is seeking writings that capture rural life and values as the 20th century ends.

The Rural Nebraska Writing Project, led by UNL sophomore student Chris Gustafson for the Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development, aims to collect short stories, poems and personal narratives about topics including agriculture, spirituality, values, schools, sports, work and community in rural Nebraska.

"The only requirement is that the writer must be from rural Nebraska, or very involved in rural life, and the writing must focus on modern rural life," said Gustafson,

whose family has farmed near Mead since 1876.

The pieces will be reviewed by an editorial board and ultimately included in a book expected to be published in late 2000.

Submission deadline is Jan. 15, 2000. Pieces may be mailed to Gustafson at 1020 CR Q, Mead, Neb., 68041, or Rural Voices, in care of the Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development, Room 58C, Filley Hall, Lincoln, Neb., 68583-0947.

For more information, contact Gustafson, (402)436-6104 or cgustaf2@bigred.unl.edu, or John Allen, center director, (800)328-2851 or jallen1@unl.edu.

Winter meetings *(Continued from page 216)*

Agronomy Highlights

"Intensifying agronomic systems: economic and environmental advantages" will be the theme of this year's Agronomy Highlights meeting.

Sponsored by the NU Department of Agronomy, the day will include seminars, presentations and displays on refining management tools for a greater intensification of agriculture in a highly changing industry. The program will be Monday, Dec. 6, at the Cornhusker Hotel in downtown Lincoln.

Seminar topics will include:

- Site-Specific Nitrogen and Irrigation Management Across Nebraska
- Taking Remote Sensing to the Field
- Roundup Ready Soybeans
- Implications of Widespread-use of Herbicide Resistant Crops
- Urban Agriculture
- Windrow Grazing and Baled Hay Feeding Strategies for Wintering Calves
- Turfgrass/Forage Grass Seed Production Project in Western Nebraska

Workshop topics include:

- Spray Application Technology
- Field Map Interpretation
- Using WeedSOFT

For more information about the program or to register, please contact JoAnn Collins at 402-472-2811. Preregistration for the meal is required by Nov. 29.

Alex Martin
Extension Weed Specialist
Jeff Rawlinson
Extension Technologist Weed Science

Crop Protection Clinics

The latest information on weed, crop and pest management will be presented at the 26th annual University of Nebraska Crop Protection Clinics in January. This ongoing

program addresses the most current issues concerning pest management today.

Meetings will be held at 12 sites for agricultural producers, crop consultants, chemical dealers and applicators. Participants can obtain pesticide applicator recertification in the agricultural plant and regulatory/demonstration and research categories through the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resource specialists in entomology, plant pathology and agronomy will present updated information for crop production. The clinic includes seminars and workshops. Each session includes a question and answer period. Afternoon sessions will focus on topics of local interest.

Registration for the all-day clinic is \$20, which includes lunch, coffee, rolls and copies of the 1999 Extension Herbicide Use Guide and meeting proceedings. Clinics begin with registration at 8:30 a.m. and end at 4 p.m.

Information on topics to be presented at individual sites and registration forms are available from your local NU Cooperative Extension offices.

Clinic dates and locations are:

- Jan. 4 – Lincoln, Lancaster County Cooperative Extension Education Center
- Jan. 5 – Auburn, Arbor Manor
- Jan. 6 – Fremont, Holiday Lodge
- Jan. 7 – Norfolk, Learning Center
- Jan. 11 – York, Chances "R"
- Jan. 12 – Deshler, American Legion
- Jan. 13 – Hastings, Garden Cafe (Holiday Inn)
- Jan. 14 – Holdrege, Ag Center
- Jan. 18 – Scottsbluff, Panhandle REC
- Jan. 19 – Ogallala, Ramada Ltd.
- Jan. 20 – Broken Bow, Uncle Eds Steak House (formerly Elks)
- Jan. 21 – O'Neil, Allison's Restaurant

Chemigation

Chemigation applicator training will be conducted at the following sites this winter:

- Feb. 16 – Norfolk, 9 a.m., Lifelong Learning Center
 - Feb. 23 – O'Neill, 9 a.m., Knights of Columbus Hall
 - Feb. 28 – Deshler, 1:30 p.m., 4-H Building
 - Feb. 29 – Columbus, 9 a.m., Ag Park
 - Feb. 29 – Hastings, 1:30 p.m., Adams County Fairgrounds
 - March 1 – Norfolk, 1 p.m., Lifelong Learning Center
 - March 2 – Kimball, 1 p.m., 4-H Building
 - March 3 – Fremont, 9 a.m., 1206 W. Third
 - March 7 – North Platte, 1 p.m., West Central Research and Extension Center
 - March 8 – Alliance, 1:30 p.m., Library/Learning Center
 - March 10 – ARDC (Ag Research and Development Center) near Mead, 9 a.m.
 - April 11 – North Platte, 1 p.m., West Central Research and Extension Center
 - May 15 – North Platte, 1 p.m., West Central Research and Extension Center
- These meetings are sponsored by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. For more information contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

Irrigation Short Course

Pivot conversions, furrow irrigation, irrigation scheduling, and remote sensing will be among the presentation topics at this year's Irrigation Short Course meetings. Commercial exhibits also will be included.

(Continued on page 216)

Winter meetings *(Continued from page 217)*

Irrigation Short Course *(Con't)*

Sessions will be held:
Feb. 28, Columbus, Ag Park
Feb. 29, Norfolk, Lifelong
Learning Center.

The meetings are sponsored by the NU Cooperative Extension and the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District.

For more information contact the Platte County Cooperative Extension Office at (402) 563-4901 or the Northeast Research and Extension Center at (402) 370-4901.

Pesticide applicator education

Pesticide applicator education, certification and recertification is available through a variety of opportunities. For more specific information on any offering, contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

For information on private applicator training dates and locations, contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

Commercial/Noncommercial Applicators

Recertification is available via exam with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture or at the following:

Ag Plant Category: Crop Protection Clinics, 12 sites, Jan. 4-21, register at the door. *(See page 215 for schedule.)*

Forest, Ornamental and Turf Categories: Nebraska Turfgrass Conference, Omaha, Jan. 10

Seed Treatment Category: Nebraska Seed Improvement Conference, Kearney, Feb. 2

Structural, Fumigation, Public Health Categories: Urban Pest Management Conference, Lincoln, Jan. 19-20

For a free registration brochure on training dates, locations and

study materials, call 800-627-7216 after Nov. 15 or contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

Pesticide applicator recertification training for limited categories is Feb. 9 and Feb. 24 at multiple sites across Nebraska. Advance registration is required.

Categories are: ag animal, ornamental and turf, aquatic, right-of-way, structural, fumigation, and wood preservation.

Initial pesticide applicator training will be Feb. 10, Feb. 22, and March 7 at multiple sites across Nebraska. Advance registration required with fee.

Categories of training vary by site. To obtain a Pesticide Applicator Education registration and study/order booklet, contact your local Cooperative Extension office or call 800-627-7216 after Nov. 15.

ruralroutes.unl.edu

Trying to track down information for your farm operation can be frustrating and time consuming. The NU Cooperative Extension has created a Web site to help farmers and ranchers and our state's rural communities maneuver through today's changing agricultural economy. It can be found on the Web at ruralroutes.unl.edu.

UNL has been an important resource for the state's agricultural industry for decades, supplying objective, research-based information to help farmers and ranchers work more efficiently and profitably.

Information on this Web site covers a range of topics, from marketing or storing this year's grain crop to planning tax strategies, bolstering farm operations, developing a family's strengths and exploring alternative paths to income or education. It also includes information about educational opportunities and Cooperative Extension programs as well as links to pertinent resources outside IANR.

Bt stalk grazing fine for cows

The advice is the same now as it was 18 months ago: grazing Bt cornstalks should be safe for cattle, University of Nebraska experts say.

"The research data to date suggests there's virtually no detrimental effects of grazing Bt corn," said Terry Mader, beef specialist at NU's Haskell Agricultural Laboratory in Concord.

The question about the safety of grazing Bt corn arose in early 1998, when some producers suspected their cows preferred grazing non-Bt corn stalks, when given a choice between Bt and non-Bt. Then, as now, Mader and NU feedlot specialist Todd Milton and forage specialist Bruce Anderson say that's possibly because Bt fields have less grain to graze; cows naturally would graze where there's more grain available. This would be especially true if the cows have had previous exposure to corn stalks. Cows typically look for the corn grain to consume first, and then the leaf, husk and other forage.

Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) corn is genetically engineered to manage European corn borers, a major Midwestern corn pest that bores into stalks and causes ear droppage. Although Bt contains a protein toxic to corn borers, there's nothing to suggest it harms grazing cattle, Mader said. The protein most likely is broken down in the cow's rumen stomach.

"From what we know about ruminants, there's a small probability it's a concern," Milton said.

Some cow owners may believe their stock perceive a palatability or digestibility difference in their Bt/non-Bt preferences, but there is no research to support this.

Mader said he believes Bt corn doesn't directly affect reproductivity, digestibility or weight gain as long as producers take into account there's less corn grain remaining in the field after harvest and supplement accordingly.